Almost every person in every community across Canada is touched in some way by mental health problems and illnesses.

/ To a parent, mental illness can mean a child who attempts suicide.
/ To a community, it can mean people who are isolated and marginalized.
/ To a company, it can mean employees who are unable to contribute to their full potential.
/ To all of us, it is deeply personal.

The facts speak volumes: we need change.

1 in 5
Canadians will have a mental health problem or illness this year.[1]

4,000
(approximately) suicides occur every year in Canada.[2]

87%
of people who die from suicide have a diagnosable mental illness.[3]

500,000
Canadians are absent from work for psychiatric reasons every day.[4]

1 in 3
workplace disability claims are related to mental illness.[5]

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Estimates suggest that at least 70% of mental health problems and illnesses have their onset during childhood and adolescence.[6] 18% of adolescents (aged 15-24) report having a mental illness or substance abuse problem.[7]

$51 billion – the economic impact of mental illness in Canada annually.[8] Mental health problems and illnesses are the leading cost of productivity loss in Canada. It is estimated that 35 million work days are lost each year due to mental health problems and illnesses,[9], and 20% of all sick leaves are due to mental health problems and illnesses.[10]

40% of parents say they would not admit to anyone – not even their doctor – that they had a child with a mental illness. [11] Many people with mental illness say it’s harder to live with the associated stigma than with the illness itself.

Despite the hard work and dedication of thousands of Canadians who work in the mental health system, many of the pressing needs of people living with mental health problems and illnesses are not being met.

/ 1.6 million adult Canadians living with mental health problems are undiagnosed.[12]
/ Only one-third of those who have a mental illness in Canada report that they have sought and accessed mental health services.[13]
/ As few as 1 in 4 children with a mental health problem or illness will receive treatment (the rest will not).[14]
/ Only 7.2% of publicly funded health expenditures went toward mental health services and support in Canada. In countries like the United Kingdom and New Zealand, that percentage is 10-11%.[15]
Mental health and well-being contribute to our quality of life and to our ability to enjoy life. It is a balance of mental, emotional, physical and spiritual health. Caring relationships, a place to call home, a supportive community, and work and leisure all contribute to mental health. However, no one’s life is perfect, so mental health is also about learning the coping skills to deal with life’s ups and downs the best we can.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), “mental health is a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his own community.”

Good mental health is associated with better physical health, improved educational attainment, increased economic participation, and rich social relationships. In fact, good health is not possible without good mental health.

Mental health problems and illnesses are disturbances in patterns of thoughts, feelings and perceptions that are significant enough to affect day-to-day functioning. They cause changes in a person’s thinking, emotional state and behaviour and disrupt the person’s ability to work and carry out their usual personal relationships.

There are many different kinds of mental health problems and illnesses. They range from more common problems such as anxiety and depression to less common disorders such as schizophrenia and bipolar disorder. It is important to recognize that the symptoms of mental health problems and illnesses are not static and can be a one-time event or cause episodes over many years.

A variety of terms are used to describe mental health problems and illnesses: mental disorder, poor mental health, psychiatric illness, nervous breakdown and burnout. There are also many slang terms, including cracked up, psycho, crazy, loony, nuts, wacko and stressed out. These terms don’t give much information about what’s really happening with the person. Worse, they reinforce negative attitudes and can be hurtful to people with mental health problems and illnesses. Myths, misinformation and lack of knowledge lead to stigma and discrimination that prevents people from accessing help and hinders recovery.